



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
RALEIGH 27603-8001

JAMES B. HUNT JR.
GOVERNOR

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

October 30, 1996

The Honorable Reed E. Hundt
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service
CC Docket No. 96-45

Dear Chairman Hundt:

I am writing to express my support for an E-rate proposal that is now under consideration by the FCC. An E-rate proposal, which would provide an affordable access to a basic package that includes Internet, is a reasonable approach that will enable universal access by providing discounts for low-income and rural areas, and will encourage competition in servicing educational markets. The proposal should also provide some incentives for the telecommunications industry to reach out to our schools and libraries.

Libraries and schools must have access to the information superhighway. To deny access to a school or library because of inability to pay will have a direct impact on educating all of our citizens to survive in the 21st century economy. Many rural schools are not able to afford basic services. Some school districts have moved ahead to introduce advanced telecommunication services into their schools. Those states that have moved to introduce advanced telecommunication services to schools and libraries, such as North Carolina, should also benefit from discounts.

To implement an E-rate will require a very open process that involves all stakeholders in our educational system. Schools and libraries will need to demonstrate they have followed an effective technology planning effort that will drive their procurement of systems that are interoperable. We cannot afford stranded investment by our schools or libraries, therefore they must procure systems that allow them migration to new technologies. The North Carolina School Technology Plan does address these issues and as of May 31, 1996, all of our North Carolina schools districts have an approved technology plan.

The Honorable Reed E. Hundt

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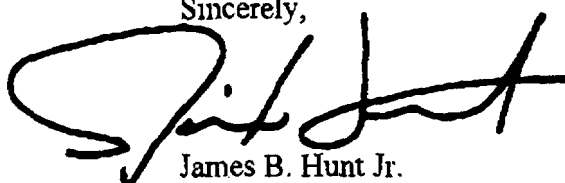
I have served as chair of many different educational reform efforts that include the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, Vice-chair of the National Center for Education and the Economy and the NGA School-To-Work Roundtable. Therefore, I am keenly aware of the need to provide the technology tools that are necessary for teachers and students to work collaboratively to create dynamic learning environments within our schools. In addition, we must enable them to interact, through the Internet and other information networks, with other learning communities and workplaces throughout our country and indeed, the world.

Electronic commerce is becoming another way for small businesses to compete in a global economy. Therefore, our rural small businesses need access to the same dynamic communications systems as are available to our urban areas. Our CONNECT NC project is working to familiarize all community citizens and institutions, both private and public, to realize the critical requirements needed to work as "internetworked" organizations in the 21st century economy. The most common issue that is surfacing is affordable access to dynamic communications networks for our schools and libraries and for small businesses in rural areas.

I would urge you and the members of the Federal-State Joint Board, who are advising you, to support our efforts to bring the power of telecommunications technology to all schools and libraries as well as to our rural communities.

My warmest personal regards.

Sincerely,



James B. Hunt Jr.

JBH:phm

cc: Commissioner Rachelle B. Chong
Commissioner Susan Ness
Commissioner Julia L. Johnson, Florida
Public Service Commission
Commissioner Kenneth McClure, Missouri
Public Service Commission
Commissioner Sharon L. Nelson, Washington
Utilities and Transportation Commission
Martha S. Hogerty, Public Counsel for the
State of Missouri
Commissioner Laska Schoenfelder, South Dakota
Public Utilities Commission



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FROM: Governor Jim Hunt
RE: Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service
DATE: October 30, 1996
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